

THE MARCH OF CIVILIZATION.—In the July number of *The Emu* you published some of my notes under the heading of "A Collector's Paradise." It is with sorrow I tell you that this paradise is no more, for that fine swamp, in which so many rare water-fowl (including *Erismatura australis*) have been breeding for hundreds of years, is now dry, having been reclaimed by the Government, cut up into blocks, and leased out, so that in less than 12 months all this has come to pass—and more, for bordering this one-time swamp were sand-hills with native pine and box, the breeding haunts of so many native birds. These fine scrubs have fallen before the settler's axe, for, being close to the reclaimed selections, the wood was utilized for building houses and for firewood, &c. Sad to say, in many places where a fine forest of pine stood less than 12 months ago, and where I admired so many birds, especially several of the Robin family, in their native haunts, the destruction has been so terrible that they are immense sand-drifts now. I shudder to think of what the end will be, for this is but one of the swamps on the reaches of the Murray River, and these swamps, the home and breeding-place of thousands of water-fowl for generations, will be dried up one after another. Where, I ask, will our poor birds go?—(CAPT.) S. A. WHITE. Wetunga (S.A.), 5/9/09.

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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.—At the last annual (Adelaide) session Mr. H. L. White exhibited a parcel of skins collected by Mr. F. L. Whitlock in the neighbourhood of Lake Way. The collection, which included *Amytis gigantura*, *Cinclosoma marginatum*, *Acanthiza robustirostris*, *Stipiturus ruficeps*, &c., and other interior forms, was as a whole extremely striking, by reason of the bright colouring of many of the species, resembling more the richness of sub-tropical forms than the paler appearance of usual desert species. This was particularly noticeable in *Malurus splendens*, which was smaller in size and more intense in colour than the south-western coastal bird; and in *M. leucotus*, being generally of a brighter blue, also darker (brown) wings, compared with the eastern bird of the same species, while examples of *Peltohyas* (*Eudromias*) *australis* were smaller and of a richer red (buff) compared, say, with examples found in Riverina, N.S.W. Possibly Mr. Mathews, in his forthcoming work, will find it expedient to make *two* races of this interesting bird. The collection also contained an albino variety of *Acanthiza robustirostris*. An account of the collection, with full field notes by the collector, will appear in a later issue of *The Emu*. Mr. White first had the collection submitted to Mr. A. J. North, of the Australian Museum, who detected and detained two new species—one, *Acanthiza whitlocki*, mentioned on page 173, and the other a Honey-eater, for which Mr. North has founded a

new genus. A full description will appear in the current (January) issue of the *Victorian Naturalist*. The new Honey-eater (*Lacustroica alfredi*) has been dedicated, by desire, to Mr. White's son, the youngest member of the A.O.U. (see Plate IX.)—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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A CURIOUS COMBAT.—I am not aware if any of the readers of *The Emu* ever noticed that when the Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*) makes the deep-toned note it also throws out a jet of water on either side, caused evidently by a rapid motion of the feet. This occurrence has often puzzled me, but of late a peculiar incident came under observation. A Bald-Coot (*Porphyrio melanonotus*), which had been wounded, was observed to be making frantic efforts to escape from a Hawk. The latter bird had made up its mind to have that Coot at all risks, and was making drive after drive, in its characteristic manner, to tire out the Coot, and at each rush the Coot was seen to edge closer and closer to a fine old male Musk-Duck who was placidly floating in the deep water, caring not a straw for the Hawk. At last the poor terrified Coot reached the Duck's side, and as the Hawk renewed its charges, attempting to hit its victim on the head with its powerful wing, the Coot dodged from one side of the Duck to the other, and it was now that the Musk-Duck began to take an active part; for, strange to say, every time the Hawk made a swoop down upon the Coot the old Duck gave forth a deep sound and splashed up the water behind him, and the time was so well judged that the Hawk received the full force of the water. Three desperate efforts were made, but after the third dousing the Hawk took himself off in disgust, but the old Musk-Duck floated on in his majestic style as if nothing had occurred or he had not saved the life of a wounded friend.—(CAPT). S. A. WHITE. Wetunga (S.A.), 5/9/09.

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MARYBOROUGH (VIC.) NOTES.—Throughout the winter the Honey-eaters have been plentiful about this district, Red Wattle-Birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) and Warty-faced Honey-eaters (*Meliphaga phrygia*) especially so. The dainty little Robins—Flame-breasted (*Petrarca phanicea*), Scarlet-breasted (*P. leggii*), and Red-capped (*P. goodenovii*)—too, have been fairly numerous. On 20th August a Flame-breasted Robin paid us a visit in town. This is the latest date on which I have observed these winter visitors here. One of the prettiest bird-sights imaginable I witnessed a few weeks ago when on a visit to the Pyrenees Ranges, beyond Avoca. Coming to a fine patch of the heath for which these ranges are noted, I was delighted to find numbers of the elegant Spine-billed Honey-eater (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*)—a bird unknown to Maryborough—present among the